



Alberta parents' rights trampled by education system and teachers' union

The Journal of Business Ethics defines a conflict of interest as “a situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties as a public official, an employee, or a professional.”

The Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) appears to have such a conflict.

They've created an absence of care for students and now they are being paid to fill it, all on the taxpayer dime.

The ATA states that “a teacher should never reveal a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity to a parent or colleague without the express consent of that student” (GSAs and QSAs in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers, page 15).

At Parents for Choice in Education (PCE), we regularly hear from families across the province who share firsthand the dangerous consequences of excluding or circumventing parents.

In one case, loving parents were shocked to discover that their autistic preteen daughter’s school had been treating her as a boy, even using a boy’s name and male pronouns to refer to her. This went on for almost a year until the daughter expressed suicidal thoughts to school staff, at which point the school finally decided to inform the parents. These concerned parents were deliberately robbed of their right and their opportunity to support their own daughter.

By not engaging the parents of these children — who the ATA admits are at a high risk for self-harm and suicide — a child's history is all but ignored. Critical information is never considered, even though it may be integral to a child's care. Past trauma and autism are two examples.

By alienating parents and guardians, the child’s support systems become dangerously narrowed. The child is cut off from important supports connected to their home, including their doctors and pediatricians, extended family, psychologists, psychiatrists, special needs supports, and faith communities.

If the citizens of Alberta truly care about vulnerable children, then we must insist that nuance be returned to the conversation. We must insist the care for children be expanded, not narrowed. We must insist communication be the first goal, and stop the enforcement of this unprecedented secrecy in our children's schools.

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Why does the ATA continue to insist parents and their communities should be left ignorant of the needs of vulnerable sexual and gender minority youth in schools?

The answer: A conflict of interest.

The ATA is a money-making machine. It receives millions in compulsory union

dues, in addition to public dollars for education research and teacher training.

Now, conveniently, the ATA has been hired by our Alberta Government to train those who will be replacements for the displaced loving parents of Alberta — at a cost of \$100/hr, to a maximum of \$1,000 per hire.

According to a recent Postmedia article, the ATA will “seek, screen and select advisers to oversee gay-straight alliance clubs”, and Education Minister David Eggen will “sign off on any person who is hired.”

It is not loving parents who are being suggested as ‘liaisons’ for our most vulnerable youth. It is not psychologists or counsellors with professional mediation and psychiatric training. It is not doctors.

It is, according to ATA spokesperson Jonathan Teghtmeyer, “certified teachers.” Certified by whom? The ATA. And these liaisons will be paying dues to whom, if they are paid positions? The ATA. Trained by whom? The ATA.

The ATA has been hired to replace the very parents they’ve advocated should be displaced.

The ATA is in a conflict of interest that puts the procurement of public dollars before the needs of vulnerable students in Alberta schools.

Enough is enough! Parents — not teachers, schools, bureaucrats or activists — must be returned to their rightful position as the primary caregivers and decision-makers in their children’s education.

Donna Trimble is Executive Director of Parents for Choice in Education (www.ParentChoice.ca)